



Teacher Support Staff Superintendent Advisory  
4:00-5:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013  
Administration Building – 215 S. 6<sup>th</sup> Street West  
Room 14

Members: Aaron Schenck, Adriel Shearer, Alex Apostle, Anthony Zook, Avis Chenoweth, Bradford Herron, Carol MacIntyre, Cathleen (Catie) Armstrong, Connie Pederson, Crista Anderson, Dave Burtch, Diane Anderson, Elizabeth McGrath, Hatton Littman, Janice Nugent, Jessica Tidwell, Karen Allen, Mary (Jane) McAllister, Melanie Charlson, Sarah Lee, Sheri Postma, Tricia Owens

Present: Karen Allen, Tricia Owens, Hatton Littman, Jane McAllister, Brad Herron, Connie Pederson, Sarah Lee, Janice Nugent, Catie Armstrong, Avis Chenoweth, Dave Burtch, Diane Anderson, Adriel Shearer, Camille Barraclough, Mark Thane, Crista Anderson, Melanie Charlson, Steve McHugh, Alex Apostle, Elizabeth McGrath

Members Absent: Aaron Schenck, Anthony Zook, Carol MacIntyre, Jessica Tidwell, Sheri Postma

NOTES

**Welcome:** At 4:03 p.m. Dr. Alex Apostle opened the meeting. Everyone introduced themselves. Apostle stated that we will review the Guiding Principles. Comments: Camille especially likes the first. Going around the table, others commented that they look good. Alex stated that these are the norms. He thanked everyone for taking the time this very busy time of the year. We start on time and end on time.

**Clarification of Kennedy Center Any Given Child Initiative** – Mark Thane (Jane McAllister, Lewis & Clark)  
Mark said that there is a perception that this is a grant, but that is somewhat of a misnomer. It is a Kennedy Center Outreach Initiative. That means that the municipalities (we are one of the smallest communities involved) will benefit from a 3 year commitment in which the Kennedy Center will analyze resources, do a gap analysis of what is available in the community and in the schools, and help develop a plan so the community resources can come to bear on the schools. No money flows with it. The benefit is the people from the Kennedy Center who come and work with us to facilitate. The question was about additional fine arts staff as a result of the grant, but there is no money. There is a large community fine arts team that involves MCPS and every community organization that you could conceive of, meeting on a monthly basis with people from the Kennedy Center. John Combs is the chair of the committee. Alex noted that when we introduced the program, there was

a statement made by a person from this program that indicated this was a program they would like to see K-12. It is currently K-8. Mark confirmed that the program is K-8. The rationale the Kennedy Center has used is that there are most oftentimes additional offerings in high school that are not available in middle school and elementary school, like drama, dance, movement, bands, orchestras, and choirs. Since there seems to be a greater devotion of staff at the high school level, and because high schools are funded at a higher level than elementaries by most states, the Kennedy Center is focusing on K-8. But they are open to K-12, and there is some conversation about that. Alex: we must understand that we are part of an elite group of school districts in the U.S. that have received that. Mark said if you Google “Kennedy Center Any Given Child,” you will find that Missoula comes up. Other places that come up are Portland, Oregon; 2-3 locations in California; Oklahoma City; Las Vegas; mostly urban areas. Missoula is somewhat of an anomaly. Alex: it is important for the committee and the district to know that we have cultivated a very positive relationship with Phyllis and Dennis Washington, and Phyllis Washington is on this board. That was pretty instrumental. The fact that we are working with UM and that we are doing good things—that is being recognized by Phyllis and Dennis Washington. That was pretty powerful to have her on the board. Jane: they asked us to fill out a survey asking what we think of the arts program right now, if we feel there is enough art in the elementary schools. Speaking for herself, Jane said if she could have more art integrated into her classroom for some of the kids she has, where that is their thing, their way of communicating, she would love to see that happen. You are saying the Kennedy Center comes in and figures out ways we can mesh with arts in the community and bring more in? Mark: yes, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade has done the Symphony, they will look at activities that teachers are recording, note that some grade levels are getting more attention than others, and look at the resources in the community. They will also look at how fine arts can be integrated with the curriculum, bringing music, movement, and visual arts into the curriculum. Jane: that is what she is interested in. Jane noted there had been the question of additional staff, but she will go back and talk about ways to integrate art. Lewis and Clark has visiting naturalists that take kids outdoors and help them use science and art together. Those kinds of things get her excited. Mark mentioned the writing collaborative too. Crista Anderson said there have been lots of questions about arts integration, whether that would bring resources to develop teachers’ skills rather than someone coming in and doing it. Alex: having Phyllis and Dennis Washington interested could open up possibilities for funding for additional opportunities. Janice suggested the idea that it might be useful for a visitor to spend an hour or so with the facility planning folks to brainstorm. Mark: they are coming monthly; early January is the next session. Alex: that would be a good idea. Mark said their schedule is already set for January, but the February dates may be close. Karen suggested they meet with the steering committee. Mark can check with John Combs. Alex: we will pursue it.

#### **Keyboarding at elementary level – Steve McHugh (Sarah Lee, Rattlesnake)**

Hatton: the response is that a proposal was submitted to identify how we could enhance keyboard education at the elementary level. It was submitted by a sub-group of the tech committee, to purchase keyboard trainers, embedded software and hardware, given that the district is moving to use funds to purchase a mobile station. At last night’s tech committee a couple of recommendations were made so that next year elementary teachers could benefit. Michele Nokleby was there. Mark talked about AlphaSmart, which is now out of production. Computers on wheels would serve multiple purposes. Hatton: devices will be available in the fall. Through the tech committee, we will work out how the professional development would work. Crista: carts on wheels would be a benefit because they would not have to go up and down stairs. Sarah Lee: are the keyboarding programs online or on actual computers? She added that wireless is difficult in many classrooms. Hatton will investigate; it is a mixture. She talked about increasing access points in each building. We have a bid out through which we will be selecting a potential designer for wireless access at the January Finance and Operations meeting. We will take that into consideration, the idea of local software rather than online interface. Melanie asked whether the expectation will be that the classroom teacher will teach the skills, or an FTE or roving teacher. Hatton replied that has not been addressed. The subgroup idea was that the classroom teacher would. Crista: a roving person, trained with keyboarding skills would go building to building for second

graders 3-4 weeks at a time. Hatton: a position is not currently funded. There was a discussion as to whether 2<sup>nd</sup> graders learn cursive—no, it is 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Mark: for the assessments this spring, plans are in the works to have devices in the hands of those who have to take the test this spring. The tests this spring are a pilot study: they will not generate individual student scores. AYP will be measured on last year's scores. That was a statewide decision negotiated with Denise Juneau and the federal government. The Smarter Balanced Assessment this spring is a chance for teachers to become familiar with the test, so we can be better positioned next year. It is an opportunity to experience the test and work out the kinks. Tricia: Flagship is trying to get some after school story and keyboarding things for 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the winter session, just for typing. It is just at Lowell, that she knows of. Karen said it brings up the idea of the possibility of buildings having some problem-solving opportunities. Different buildings may want to do it in different ways. One way may not fit all. Tell us what you'd like to do about it and we will see what we can do; shared problem-solving is helpful. Crista: the tech committee is helpful. She wonders if there could be a survey to ask each librarian what is happening in their building in relation to keyboarding, get ideas flowing, ask what sites they are using, web apps, things on school websites, so they can share among one another.

#### **Compensation for doctorates – Steve McHugh (Janice Nugent, Jefferson)**

Alex: this question has come up quite a few times. In most districts that he has been associated with, that has been a negotiated issue; usually they would compensate for the degree. Steve: it is a negotiated issue. Steve said that he and Melanie and Mark have been involved; they have talked about it. A finite number of dollars go into negotiations, and when we start distributing money it has never gotten to that column. Melanie: we have talked about it, brought it to the negotiating table, and we can certainly do it again. We are looking at a set number of dollars, and we try to share them out. Karen asked if we could bring some data the next time. How many of our teaching staff have doctorates? Melanie: 12 or 15 or so. Avis asked about the compensation. Melanie explained the salary matrix, which does not have a column past M.A. plus 45. There is a stipend for National Board Certified teachers of \$2000/year. Janice suggested a separate category, not in steps and lanes. Because this relates to such a small group of people, it is easy to have it not taken care of. She thinks that several of our specialists have that level of education, especially our physical therapists—it is difficult to get them, because they can earn much more money elsewhere. Melanie thinks we recognize them under National Board Certification. Janice confirmed. Steve: the national certification would be worth more than another level on the salary matrix. Janice said she has had people bring this up to her many, many times the last 5-6 years; she has brought it up in negotiations. She thinks even a relatively small amount would be a start. Melanie said she can bring it up again. Janice asked whether it couldn't come as a suggestion from the administration. Steve and Melanie thought that it could. Alex said he has expressed his opinion on it. As a public school system we should recognize all scholarly activity, and we do that throughout the salary schedule. That is one piece that has not been dealt with. He has supported it. It is part of the negotiating process. Melanie said she can bring forward whatever issues apply to contract. Ariel: when do the meetings start? Mark: probably January. Melanie submits a letter in November; they have met twice. Diane: many folks in the classified staff have teaching certification; something like this would be of interest to them also. Experience and education, when you have to take out that limited pot of money, it is really hard. Melanie: we have not met with the administration; we have not started negotiations. Alex has encouraged the negotiating teams to get together as soon as possible. Melanie: those meetings are publicized.

#### **Lack of substitutes – Steve McHugh (Lowell Staff)**

Steve said this is another area he and Melanie have talked about on a number of occasions. He sees suggestions of hiring more subs and actively recruiting subs. We do. We have 240 to 250 subs in classified and certified staff. Sick leave nearly doubles on Mondays and Fridays; so does personal leave. It makes sense that personal leave would be Friday. Coaches are also often gone on Friday. What happens sometimes is that we have 110 to 120 staff members out. He talked to Anita, our sub dispatcher; she said she just hired 6 on Thursday. A lot of

people were out on Friday. Anita told the 6 people to expect a call the next day; only one was at work the next day. We have people who don't come to work on Mondays and Fridays and subs who don't want to work on Mondays and Fridays. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, Anita will get calls from subs asking when they will ever get to work again. Steve said we recognize that it is also a money item: some districts around us have raised the sub pay. Hellgate Elementary is \$80 a day; ours is \$72. Target Range is also higher. We spend \$700-\$900,000 per year. Alex said it is \$850,000-\$1 million on substitutes per year. Avis wondered how many teachers per year you could hire for that. Alex: there are legitimate reasons why people are absent. Avis: you could hire a sub teacher for each school. Steve: we have 17 schools: we would still be short too many people on Mondays and Fridays. It's an issue where sometimes people are not coming to work and they should be. We could determine who they are if we chose to do so. We can't say they're not sick. He does not know how we solve it. For the people who use sick leave and for all of us, it is a tremendous benefit. If we are not using it appropriately, it is a problem. We are constantly trying to recruit people, but at a certain level we don't try to recruit anymore. It is not an easy issue, and it is not one we can solve by having more people on the sub list. Adriell: throwing more money at it won't solve it. He used to drive 45 minutes to sub at another district where after 20 days of subbing, they gave an extra \$15 a day; so they were incentivized to get in the days, and to be more reliable and more requested. That might be a way to bring in more subs on Fridays. Several people suggested that we could pay more on Mondays and Fridays. Steve: keeping the sick days is substantial when it comes time to retire. Karen asked him to explain. Steve: if you are 30 years in the district with a master's plus 30 (semester rather than quarter credits), and you have kept your 120 days, which is how much you can accumulate, you would start this year with 132 days. Then if you retire, you receive 60 days at full pay that you can put into your retirement, approximately \$400 per month for the rest of your life in your retirement pay. Billings is at 25 percent; we are 50 percent. Steve: we bumped the classified; we are trying to get them closer. We want our people to come to work. When the paras come, we know the kids are taken care of. When the teachers come, the learning will take place. Melanie explained that if you hit the maximum of 120 days, you get the extra 12 days paid in June, a nice incentive for longevity. Steve: we are proud of sick leave in the district. If people have a catastrophic illness, we want to help them; people can donate sick leave. The district tries to work with sick leave, and if people are sick we try to keep them in a paid status as long as we can so there is one thing less stressful in their lives. We cross over—trades and crafts, teachers, administrators, all can donate across the board. That has just started. That is the type of thing we need to set out there. If people went skiing and used sick leave, he would look at them and say why would you do something like that? It's inappropriate. Tricia: we don't have a sub for a teacher, so others have to double their class size at no compensation. The district saves the \$72, but it is more on the teachers' plates. Steve said he does not think 110 people are sick on those particular days. Tricia said she has had students sitting on the floor. Steve said that as a principal he would close down Title for that day and shorten it up that way. This is a broader issue, one that we are all aware of, and he wishes we would try to solve it in a way that did not involve throwing more money at something already so expensive. He would like to pay people more on a regular basis. Melanie: we all need to get the word out about the benefits of holding on to those days. You never know if you might need them. That does not take away the reality of thirty-five 7 and 8 year olds instead of 20. We could problem solve more about what to do about that; we could look at what could happen at each school and how we can solve that. Tricia: the principal could work on it; it doesn't fall on the principal's shoulders, but on the teachers' shoulders. Melanie: you are doing your best to keep learning going. Adriell: the district has created a very generous way to let us use sick leave. If we are misusing it, that generosity of spirit toward sick leave could go away—so that obligation rests with all of us. Tricia: should we bring that back to our buildings? Melanie: yes, remind people of the different contracts and different benefits. You do not know when you may really need all of your days. Encourage people to read the notes. Karen thinks it is a building discussion—she suggested taking it to the leadership team. If you have had it happen 3 times, a lot of people have not had it happen. We are not used to collaborating to make decisions, but it is part of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning; more and more things will have to be determined at building level. Having us come in and tell you what to do doesn't work. Steve: as people play fairer, our contracts get

shorter; that is part of the issue, that folks have to come to work on Mondays and Fridays if they are not sick. Alex: this is something on which we could all come together. The district does have a responsibility to set the table: teachers assuming a second classroom of students is not a good situation. This issue is more complicated than meets the eye. If we all come together and look at how we are spending nearly \$1 million per year, and how at the end of the day if you save the sick leave, you will get a big benefit on your retirement, we could come together and communicate about saving sick leave, and how we have a professional responsibility to be at work every day. If we communicate that in a respectful manner, we can try to save some of that \$800,000-\$1 million dollars and maybe move it over to compensation. And if we are all on the same page, we all win. He knows there are times when you are sick or need a break. We need to talk about it. At the negotiations table, we can sit down, say we could do a better job, talk about it, and come up with a better plan. He is willing to talk about subs, paying more money, and looking at the bigger picture. Karen: if we save money, it goes back to everyone. Melanie: roughly over \$300,000 to certified is equivalent to one percent. We are pushing nearly a million every year. Steve: if people play fair on both sides, the contract gets smaller. Alex: generally, not knowing all the details but having a good idea, if a teacher is asked to take on 2 classes, that is not good, and we need to compensate that person. It is not fair, for whatever reason that situation is created. Tricia: if we bring back to our school improvement team, whatever grade level is gone, the principal says the other teachers will cover, then do we bring it back? Alex said he has been in districts where this happened; it did not happen for very long. Discuss it, bring it forward, bring it to the negotiating table so we have a big picture look. Next year it will be different. You have a legitimate point and need to bring it forward. Steve suggested the Principal's Advisory Committee. He added that we will not consistently solve it, but he thinks there are better ways to solve it. Melanie: pay with professional development and sick leave. Alex: it takes people to come together and talk about it. He is open to suggestions about it. Diane: webinars, etc—but still have to parse out time to do them; maybe archiving the webinar, maybe flipping it so they can have rich conversations (like flipped classrooms). It is a complex situation that requires a complex solution. If we are supporting teachers, we need to know what is going on. Alex said he was a sub, and he has a lot of respect for them. We all know that it is just not the same to have a sub in the classroom.

Alex: if we don't get through the agenda, we will finish at 5 and move agenda items to the next meeting. Karen noted that she is next, but if there is a burning issue below that, would you entertain taking that ahead? Alex thinks all are important, and we should go down the line.

#### **Planning time for Title and Special Ed teachers – Steve McHugh and Karen Allen (Linda Burr, Lowell)**

Karen: this is a hard one. She did a survey of principals; she thinks it is better in some places than others. She has been a special ed teacher. She worked with a boy with autism at her lunchtime; one time she slid around a corner and his father the policeman gave her a ticket. This is a discussion she recommends needs to happen at the building level. In the elementary schools, because of the schedule, K-3 teachers have more planning time than 4-5 teachers. We have to figure it out, but some people choose to have their schedule and some people have scheduled time. There are scheduling committees and leadership teams at each building. Karen said she would be happy to come and facilitate. It is a building wide decision, and different people can help in different ways. She encourages people to talk in the building about how to make it better. Karen said she thinks creativity is at the building level. Connie: at the high school we are so departmentalized that it is difficult for people to come together; it is a huge issue. Karen: maybe different levels need different ways of looking at it. Karen offered to spend some time with Connie and understand the situation. Connie said she would appreciate that. Janice: if she understands, you are saying the special ed teachers and Title teachers should be creative? Karen: no, everyone. Janice asked if the grade school teachers and principals have to figure out how to get their planning done. Karen: different buildings are working their own schedules. As they look at schedules for grade level teams, they need to look at the special education also. Fair is not always equal. That is a decision that building teachers make and work together. Janice: the entire staff work together. Karen confirmed. One

principal said anytime the resource teacher asks for a half day to get their paperwork done, they get it. It may not look like a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher's situation, but she thinks it can be equitable. Special education and Title teachers need to not be out on their own. Camille: all special education teachers at Meadow Hill have the first period for planning; they are trying to get life skills teachers in that. It can happen. It very much allows progress to be made much quicker, having everyone meeting all together on Thursday. Karen: if you are in a school where what Camille is talking about is not happening, she suggests that you invite Camille to talk about it. It helps to know that other people are doing certain things. Trying to fit the solution to the situation is going to work. They should not have to scrounge for the solution themselves. Melanie noted that there is a contractual part to it also. Karen: universal design is to find a way that everybody has a place to be.

Alex would like to table items 7, 8, 9, and 10, so that we can spend more time than what we have.

Agenda items not discussed at this meeting are as follows:

- Technology communications at building level – Hatton Littman (Diane Anderson, Central Library)
- Special Ed technology – Karen Allen and Hatton Littman (Janice Nugent, Jefferson)
- Appearance of non-equitable district focus addressing student academics– Karen Allen (Janice Nugent, Jefferson)
- PLC meeting time commitments – Karen Allen (Janice Nugent, Jefferson)

Diane thinks the format, the ability to facilitate as equitably across the district is great; she is very impressed. Hatton said the kudos are deserved to Adriel; he created the first version. Tracy Long, our new webmaster, created it in a new format that everyone can access.

Alex wished happy holidays to everyone. It is very impressive to see this many people on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December.

The meeting concluded at 5:01 p.m.

As recording secretary for this meeting, I certify these minutes to be a true and correct copy of what was taken at the meeting.

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Elizabeth Serviss, Minutes Recorder

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Alex P. Apostle, Superintendent